

PRESS RELEASE

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Baltimore's Western High School Named *Maryland Blue Ribbon School of Excellence*

State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick announced this year's Maryland Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence today, and Baltimore City Public Schools' (City Schools) own Western High School is one of six statewide to receive the prestigious distinction.

"On behalf of City Schools, congratulations to the entire Western High School community for this tremendous accomplishment. You make us proud," said Dr. Andrés Alonso, chief executive officer of City Schools. "This distinction recognizes that today's Western maintains the schools' tradition of academic excellence. Kudos to Ms. Matthews, teachers, staff, and students and families!"

Blue Ribbon Schools are part of a state and national program that recognizes schools that exhibit high performance and/or significant improvement in reading and mathematics as measured by Maryland assessments. To qualify, schools must meet rigorous Maryland State Department of Education and U.S. Department of Education standards. They must be extremely high achievers in reading and mathematics, or economically disadvantaged schools that are exceeding norms and dramatically closing achievement gaps in reading and math.

Founded in 1844, Western is the oldest women's public school in the nation. A pioneer in single sex public education, the school has consistently attracted young women of academic excellence from neighborhoods across Baltimore City. Its 840 students choose between an accelerated college preparatory program and an honors college preparatory program. In 2007, the school had a 100 percent college placement rate, and its seniors received more than \$4 million in scholarships and grants. Earlier this month, it was named by U.S. News and World Report as one of America's Best High Schools.

"In recent years, every part of the school community has participated in supporting Western and its 165-year heritage of excellence in educating Baltimore's young women," said Eleanor Matthews, principal of Western High School. "Western girls are benefiting from increased expectations and requirements. Our partnerships with Towson University, the University of Maryland, the University of Baltimore, Morgan University, Loyola College, Northrop Grumman, St. Paul's School for Girls and others have both invigorated our students and involved them in college-level academic challenges."

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Western-Blue Ribbon School

Maryland can select up to six schools for Blue Ribbon recognition. State recipients go on to compete for National Blue Ribbon awards which will be announced in September 2009.

City Schools is now home to eight Maryland Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence. In addition to Western High School, the following Baltimore City schools have won Blue Ribbon status:

- Baltimore City College
- Baltimore Polytechnic Institute
- Bentalou Elementary
- Patapsco Elementary-Middle
- Roland Park Elementary-Middle
- George Washington Elementary
- Cecil Elementary